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THEME OF THE UNDERCLASS IN WRITINGS OF IVAN FRANKO AND ARTHUR MORRISON'S SLUM FICTION IN COMPARATIVE ASPECT

Despite of different geographical, economic and cultural values, the literary works of Ukraine and England possess a number of common typological features, which testifies to the mutual influence of literary tendencies in the world context. Comparing typological peculiarities of Ivan Franko's and Arthur Morrison's writings related to the theme of the social bottom, we notice the close integration of literary movements in different countries.

Key words: naturalistic tendencies, slum fiction, social bottom, problematics.

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ТЕМА СОЦІАЛЬНОГО ДНА В ТВОРЧОСТІ ІВАНА ФРАНКА ТА ЛІТЕРАТУРА НЕТРІВ АРТУРА МОРРИСОНА В ПОРІВНЯЛЬНОМУ АСПЕКТІ

Незважаючи на різні географічні, економічні та культурні цінності, літературний доробок України та Англії містить у собі ряд спільних типологічних рис, що свідчить про взаємовплив літературних тенденцій у світовому контексті. Зіставляючи типологічні особливості творів Івана Франка та Артура Моррісона, пов'язаних з тематикою соціального дна, ми помічаємо тісну інтеграцію літературних течій в різних країнах.

Ключові слова: натуралістичні тенденції, література нетрів, соціальне дно, проблематика.

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ТЕМА СОЦИАЛЬНОГО ДНА В ТВОРЧЕСТВА ИВАНА ФРАНКО И ЛИТЕРАТУРА ТРУЩОБ АРТУРА МОРРИСОНА В СРАВНИТЕЛЬНОМ АСПЕКТЕ

Несмотря на различные географические, экономические и культурные ценности, литературное наследие Украины и Англии включает в себя ряд общих типологических черт, что свидетельствует о взаимовлиянии литературных тенденций в мировом контексте. Сопоставляя типологические особенности произведений Ивана Франко и Артура Моррисона, связанных с тематикой социального дна, мы замечаем тесную интеграцию литературных течений в разных странах.

Ключевые слова: натуралистические тенденции, литература трущоб, социальное дно, проблематика.

The timeliness of the topic of «humble beginnings» in British and Ukrainian naturalistic writings is dictated by the need for a diverse study of the social «bottom» in the general context of comparative literary criticism. Due to the rapid development of industrialization, which took place in most European states at the end of the 19-th century, this topic was controversial both for authors and readers. So, the processes of industrialization set new challenges for the writers – to depict characteristic conditions of people's life of that time. Turning to the modeling of the contemporary aspects of life, they reflected new problems, conflicts, and types.

The elements of biologism and social Darwinism are found in one of the most characteristic phenomena of English naturalism – the so-called «slum fiction» in 80-90 years of the 19-th century. The slum in the late Victorian period became a Condition of England theme, which found expression in newspapers, documentary accounts, photographs, and last but not least, in the novel. The preoccupation with the question of slums in the last two decades of the nineteenth century attracted a growing readership. Slum fiction, as it came to be called, emerged not only to provide a forum for the Condition of England debate, which was raised in the Hungry Forties, but it became quickly an independent sub-genre with a distinct aesthetics. Slum novels shared many features of naturalistic fiction, i.e. they tended to be concerned with the murky aspects of contemporary urban life; their typical settings were the slums, i.e. overcrowded urban areas characterised by substandard housing and squalor [11].

The slum novels were much indebted to Charles Dickens's social novels, but they were free of their sentimentality and Gothic extravagance. The working class described in the slum novels represented the «other nation», abhorred and feared by the leisure class. Along with the factual imaging of the slum's life, Charles Dickens introduced into his novels and stories a lot of new lexical forms from the folk spoken language, as well as the jargon and dialect of the locals.

In the article «The Slum movement in Fiction» Scottish journalist J. Findlater accurately described the «slum fiction», pointing out that it became rather popular and it was «contagious» in its nature and led to the appearance of followers [5; 47].

One of the most popular representatives of this movement in English literature is Arthur Morrison. Although his slum fiction fell into obscurity, every publication concerned with late Victorian literary history mentions him. According to P. J. Keating, Morrison «established the predominant tone of slum fiction in the nineties» [6]. He created authentic lower-class protagonists and described realistically the squalor and brutality of life in London's East End, «the sewer of England and of Christendom» (Mencken). Unlike his mentor, Walter Besant, Morrison did not look upon the slum paternalistically and expressed no hope that it could be regenerated

by upper-class altruists like Angela Messenger and Harry Goslett, the protagonists of Besant's slum novel «All Sorts and Conditions of Men». Morrison saw the slum as a socially deviant culture that had to be radically eradicated. There are no respectable poor in Morrison's slum fiction. All his protagonists are physically and morally mutilated.

Morrison's collection of stories «Tales of Mean Streets» was published in 1894. As the title suggests, the streets of the workers' suburbs are a pitiful sight. Poverty, beggarhood, alcoholism and other disastrous defects have displaced the inhabitants' humanity, turning them into wild animals, into creatures that are not always deserving regret. However, the writer's desire was not to depict the human characters, his aim was a photographic reproduction of the terrible conditions of the existence of stewbums.

In the introduction to his «Tales of Mean Streets» Morrison writes: «This street is in the East End. There is no need to say in the East End of what. The East End is a vast city, as famous in its way as any the hand of man has made.... A shocking place... an evil plexus of slums that hide human creeping things, where filthy men and women live on penn'orths of gin, where collars and clean shirts are decencies unknown, where every citizen wears a black eye, and none ever combs his hair» [8; 15].

The writer depicts the East End as a long dark street, the houses of which have absorbed all the vices of poverty. A street with a length of hundreds of miles, having nothing that could please the eye. On both sides of the street there are low monotonous houses with two or three windows and a slightly larger opening for the doors. These smelly dwellings look like stables, but not like human homes. Then the reader finds out that most of the street residents are unemployed. According to the author, this is «a race whose token is a clay pipe, and whose enemy is soap» [8; 15].

Ivan Franko also paid much attention to the theme of social «bottom» in his writings. He understood that people who were at the bottom of a society became victims of poverty trap. This class of people is also called «the underclass». It is largely composed of the young unemployed, long-unemployed, chronically sick, disabled, old, or single-parent (usually the mother) families. Children of the underclass (especially those from single-parent families) often lack educational qualification and social and other skills and are, therefore, unable to rise out of it [10].

Undoubtedly, small Boryslav cannot be compared to London in its size, but Franko's depicting of life in this Galician town causes similar impressive visions: «The streets are so narrow, where the mud, stamped by thousands of feet, never dries. Along the streets are delves and clay dunes which look like deep coffins, open for thousands of living sacrifices. The gray sky over these gray graves, black brine getters, picking up crooked handles and roaming carts with woods – that's all your eye will meet, in addition to dirty, scratched shops and more dirty Jewish dwellings» [3; T.14; 280-281].

Reflecting the new phenomena and challenges of those days, Franko naturally reproduced stunning pictures of the destitute existence and the hard work of brine getters. He described in detail with a photographic precision the dwelling («barrack») of workers, resembling ordinary stable, attached to a wax warehouse: «A tight, dirty and stuffy barrack full of workers. Bare walls slightly dressed with lime-white, a small icon and a shiver of mirror on one of them, in one corner is a couch made of three boards ... No furnace, no kitchenware, no bedding or chests... on the floor, like herrings in a barrel, are lying some short-breathed human beings. That's a jungle for workwomen» [3; T.21; 28]. This description, which fits into the framework of the poetic peculiarities of naturalism, coincides with the description of the urban «bottom» in the writings of Italian verists L. Capuana, G. Verga, M. Serao [2; 45].

As for the typological affinity of naturalism in I. Franko's and A. Morrison's works, the purpose of their writings should be defined at first. It should be noted that Morrison's naturalistic novels typologically coincide with Emil Zola's «Germinal» and Ivan Franko's «Boryslav Laughs». The abovementioned writers were not comfortable with their and their compatriots' living environment, therefore their task was to give people a reflection or a «photograph» of the real state of things, so that, seeing the true unattractive life, people could make the appropriate conclusions and change the situation for the better.

Villainy, cruelty and primitiveness of some A. Morrison's characters allow the reader to draw conclusions about the unhappy life in the London slums. The proof is the episode from «Tales of Mean Streets» («Behind the Shade») which talks about an accident that happened with Mrs. Perkins. «A dweller in Stidder's Rents overtook her one night, and, having vigorously punched her in the face and breast, kicked her and jumped on her for five minutes as she lay on the pavement. (In the dark, it afterwards appeared, he had mistaken her for his mother.)» [8; 99].

The common feature of the two writers was that Franko and Morrison witnessed a life of that time that could not pass past them without leaving a trace in their souls. Arthur Morrison – the son of a poor locksmith – was «personally» acquainted with London slum dwellers and the laws prevailing there. Morrison states: «For certain years I have lived in the East End of London, and have been, not an occasional visitor, but a familiar and equal friend in the house of the East Ender in all his degrees; for, though the steps between be smaller, there are more social degrees in the East End than ever in the West. In this experience I have seen and I have heard things that persons sitting in committee-rooms would call diabolical fable; nevertheless, I have seen them, and heard them» [7; 9].

M. Tkachuk notes that Ivan Franko is Balzac of the Galician life, because he knows profoundly the details of everyday life and the work of different strata of the population, prices for land and oil, economic relations and special rules in this region. «The depictions of the workers' miserable lives, episodes of the moral fall of former plowmen, their drunkenness in the taverns, pitifulness, negligibility, exhausted appearance, their entertainment and primitive life are the best scenes in Boryslav's works in terms of their expressiveness, naturalism and tragedy. The artistic picture of the world, created by Franko, is adequate to reality, not because it reproduces life in the forms of external likelihood, as it was characteristic to naturalists, but because the creative method of the writer opened up the possibility of the most complete penetration of artistic consciousness into the sphere of events, the hidden spring of social existence of the era. Franko's external plausibility revealed the true connection of social causes and consequences in an infinitely complex world. He urged artists to see the true connection of social causes and effects, to understand how «the influences of nature and society» determine human behavior» [2; 43].

As for the English naturalist A. Morrison, he decided to write his «Tales of Mean Streets» «in a simple and truthful manner, without sentimentality and a glance» [6; 172]. R. Kipling helped him to solve this problem by publishing his «The Record of Badalija Herodsfoot» (1890). Relying partly on Kipling's experience, Morrison refuses to act as an intermediary between the literary work and the reader, leaving the right to judge what is happening to the latter [6; 172]. This led to the fact that the writer was charged on with the lack of firm moral convictions, indifference and inability to feel somebody's pain. In the article «What is a Realist» (1897), which subsequently became the preface to the third edition of the novel «A Child of the Jago» (1896), Morrison stated that he had

no intention of «weeping» over the fate of his heroes: «My technical method is my own, and is deliberately designed to achieve a certain result, as is the method of every man – painter, poet, sculptor, or novelist – who is not the slave and the plaything of his material» [7; 9].

«A Child of the Jago» caused an instant furore. Few reviewers of the novel had failed to be impressed by the power of Morrison's fiction – the savagery of the depiction of street violence, the pathos of neglected, diseased infants, the scathing attack on high-minded philanthropic interventions; what many refused to accept, though, was the author's insistence that his book had been based entirely on fact.

Morrison stated that his intention in writing «A Child of the Jago» had been to show the gradual corruption of a basically decent boy, Dicky Perrott, by the slum in which he was born and grew. «It was my fate, wrote Morrison in his preface to the third edition of the novel, to encounter a place in Shoreditch, where children were born and reared in circumstances which gave them no reasonable chance of living decent lives: where they were born foredoomed to a criminal or semi-criminal career. No matter what good impulses Dicky has, no matter any kindnesses shown to him by an outsider, nor any stroke of good luck – he cannot evade the destiny that awaits all who are bred within the filthy streets and noxious moral atmosphere of the Jago» [7; 8].

The nature of the writer's arguments is reduced primarily to a protest against the distortion of the truth of life against the critics' attempts to force the artist to conceal its unattractive features. The writer brings up a serious ethical problem that has repeatedly attracted public attention in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The author of «A Child of the Jago» was often asked if he considered it possible for himself, as an artist, to touch the darkest aspects of human existence. Morrison answered quite straightforwardly: «The plan and the intention of my story made it requisite that, in telling it, I should largely adhere to fact; and I did so. If I write other tales different in scope and design, I shall adhere to fact or neglect it as may seem good to me: regardless of anybody's classification as a realist, or as anything else. For though I have made a suggestion, right or wrong, as to what a realist may be, whether I am one or not is no concern of mine; but the concern (if it be anybody's) of the tabulators and the watersifters» [7; 10].

Both Morrison and Franko tried to analyze objectively some facts of Zola's theory of naturalism, in particular as regards the role of biological factors in human life. V. Matviyishyn noted that «the idea of Zola has a certain value, because the development of modern science makes it possible to speak about the role of heredity in people's lives, about influence of biological factors on the formation of their nature» [1; 56]. Polish researcher Gustav Piotrowsky in his monograph «Zola and Naturalism» notes that Ivan Franko is «deeper than Zola, he has a clear socialistic tendency». The author suggests that such Franko's works as «Boa constrictor», «Boryslav laughs», «At the bottom» have tendencies of Zola [9; 154].

Unlike most of Franko's heroes, the characters of A. Morrison's novel are not representatives of the working class, because in the overwhelming majority it is the declassed people, the lumpen-proletariat. It should be noted that one of the characteristic features of the literature of the 90s is the appearance of novels exploring the specified social group, sometimes even sacrificing for the sake of this image some other important events and phenomena, for example, the onset and development of an organized labour movement. The fear of radical social cataclysms, on the one hand, and the desire to show the depth of the human fall in the conditions of the capitalist formation, on the other hand, attracted the representatives of British naturalism in the direction of the slum, and not in the direction of class struggles.

Critics characterize Morrison's method as realistic, although the writer himself did not agree with it. Morrison sharply throws off «the labels put on him by scientists and Sophists». The writer notes that the term «realism» in the sense of criticism does not assess the works of literature and art sincerely. He is positioning himself as «a simple narrator who uses all the means to portray life as it seems to be. He also «refuses to submit to any of the proposed formulas» [4; 15]. Due to the external attraction to objectivism he manages to follow an internal, sometimes very subjective point of view. Like Kipling in his gloomy stories on Indian subjects, Morrison reaches a demagogic extreme, ceasing to see life in its different manifestations, that is, realistically.

Undoubtedly, naturalism in writings of Arthur Morrison, as well as Ivan Franko, was only one of the stages in the process of evolution of their aesthetic views, but the achievements of the writers in this direction are so original and significant that they allow not only to present adequately the personal literature heritage of the authors, but also the general achievements of the English and Ukrainian literary movements of the last third of the nineteenth century.

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